

they should open the Government, and I will work with them to get this done.

Speaker of the House Gingrich

Q. How do you feel about fellow Time magazine man of the year?

The President. I think he's had a big impact on events. That's the standard. That's it.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much.

Q. Thank you. Merry Christmas. Where did you get that tie?

The President. Someone gave it to me. It's one of my Christmas ties. You know, I try to wear one every day for the last 12 days before Christmas.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996

December 18, 1995

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 1977, the "Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996."

This bill is unacceptable because it would unduly restrict our ability to protect America's natural resources and cultural heritage, promote the technology we need for long-term energy conservation and economic growth, and provide adequate health, educational, and other services to Native Americans.

First, the bill makes wrong-headed choices with regard to the management and preservation of some of our most precious assets. In the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, it would allow harmful clear-cutting, require the sale of timber at unsustainable levels, and dictate the use of an outdated forest plan for the next 2 fiscal years.

In the Columbia River basin in the Pacific Northwest, the bill would impede implementation of our comprehensive plan for managing public lands—the Columbia River Basin

Ecosystem Management Project. It would do this by prohibiting publication of a final Environmental Impact Statement or Record of Decision and requiring the exclusion of information on fisheries and watersheds. The result: a potential return to legal gridlock on timber harvesting, grazing, mining, and other economically important activities.

And in the California desert, the bill undermines our designation of the Mojave National Preserve by cutting funding for the Preserve and shifting responsibility for its management from the National Park Service to the Bureau of Land Management. The Mojave is our newest national park and part of the 1994 California Desert Protection Act—the largest addition to our park system in the lower 48 States. It deserves our support.

Moreover, the bill would impose a misguided moratorium on future listings and critical habitat designations under the Endangered Species Act. And in the case of one endangered species, the marbled murrelet, it would eliminate the normal flexibility for both the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to use new scientific information in managing our forests.

Second, the bill slashes funding for the Department of Energy's energy conservation programs. This is short-sighted and unwise. Investment in the technology of energy conservation is important for our Nation's long-term economic strength and environmental health. We should be doing all we can to maintain and sharpen our competitive edge, not back off.

Third, this bill fails to honor our historic obligations toward Native Americans. It provides inadequate funding for the Indian Health Service and our Indian Education programs. And the cuts targeted at key programs in the Bureau of Indian Affairs are crippling—including programs that support child welfare; adult vocational training; law enforcement and detention services; community fire protection; and general assistance to low-income Indian individuals and families. Moreover, the bill would unfairly single out certain self-governance tribes in Washington State for punitive treatment. Specifically, it would penalize these tribes financially for

using legal remedies in disputes with non-tribal owners of land within reservations.

Finally, the bill represents a dramatic departure from our commitment to support for the arts and the humanities. It cuts funding of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities so deeply as to jeopardize their capacity to keep providing the cultural, educational, and artistic programs that enrich America's communities large and small.

For these reasons and others my Administration has conveyed to the Congress in earlier communications, I cannot accept this bill. It does not reflect my priorities or the values of the American people. I urge the Congress to send me a bill that truly serves the interests of our Nation and our citizens.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 18, 1995.

**Message to the House of
Representatives Returning Without
Approval the Department of
Veterans Affairs and Housing and
Urban Development, and
Independent Agencies
Appropriations Act, 1996**

December 18, 1995

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2099, the "Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996."

H.R. 2099 would threaten public health and the environment, end programs that are helping communities help themselves, close the door on college for thousands of young people, and leave veterans seeking medical care with fewer treatment options.

The bill includes no funds for the highly successful National Service program. If such funding were eliminated, the bill would cost nearly 50,000 young Americans the opportunity to help their community, through AmeriCorps, to address vital local needs such as health care, crime prevention, and education while earning a monetary award to help them pursue additional education or

training. I will not sign any version of this appropriations bill that does not restore funds for this vital program.

This bill includes a 22 percent cut in requested funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), including a 25 percent cut in enforcement that would cripple EPA efforts to enforce laws against polluters. Particularly objectionable are the bill's 25 percent cut in Superfund, which would continue to expose hundreds of thousands of citizens to dangerous chemicals and cuts, which would hamper efforts to train workers in hazardous waste cleanup.

In addition to severe funding cuts for EPA, the bill also includes legislative riders that were tacked onto the bill without any hearings or adequate public input, including one that would prevent EPA from exercising its authority under the Clean Water Act to prevent wetlands losses.

I am concerned about the bill's \$762 million reduction to my request for funds that would go directly to States and needy cities for clean water and drinking water needs, such as assistance to clean up Boston Harbor. I also object to cuts the Congress has made in environmental technology, the climate change action plan, and other environmental programs.

The bill would reduce funding for the Council for Environmental Quality by more than half. Such a reduction would severely hamper the Council's ability to provide me with advice on environmental policy and carry out its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The bill provides no new funding for the Community Development Financial Institutions program, an important initiative for bringing credit and growth to communities long left behind.

While the bill provides spending authority for several important initiatives of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), including Community Development Block Grants, homeless assistance and the sale of HUD-owned properties, it lacks funding for others. For example, the bill provides no funds to support economic development initiatives; it has insufficient funds for incremental rental vouchers; and it cuts nearly in half my request for tearing